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# THE DEFENSE OF FREEDOM





# THE DEFENSE OF FREEDOM

FOUR ADDRESSES ON THE PRESENT  
CRISIS IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

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# INTRODUCTION

BY CARL L. BECKER

THE four addresses which are here reprinted, although delivered at different times and to different sorts of audiences, all deal with the same general subject. That subject is expressed in the title of the first address: "What really threatens American democracy?" President Day is profoundly convinced that democracy, in so far as its aims can be realized, offers the only means of preserving or advancing any way of life that can rightly be called civilized. He is aware

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that democracy is now threatened by serious dangers. He believes that certain things should be done, and can be done, to safeguard democracy in the United States against those dangers. The four addresses achieve a notable degree of unity, partly because they all deal with the same general subject, but chiefly because everything that is said about any particular aspect of the subject is inspired and controlled by these deeply held convictions.

The most obvious danger that threatens democracy comes from without—from the armed aggressions of totalitarian states whose avowed aim is to destroy democracy. For democratic countries in Europe this danger is immediate and all important; for the United States it is comparatively remote. But President Day is convinced that it would be less remote if the British Empire should be destroyed; and he believes, therefore, that we should give Britain all the aid we can, and that in any case we should be adequately armed for all contingencies. He is well aware that war, as a means of defending democracy, is a dangerous double-edged sword. Rarely has this “dilemma of

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democracy" been presented with greater point or brevity. "Not to fight may mean the loss of democracy through . . . subjection; to fight may mean the loss of democracy through unavoidable political transformations 'to win the war.' . . . To fight or not to fight, with the possible loss of democracy either way." The sensible conclusion seems to be that although war, being the negation of the democratic idea, can do nothing in itself to strengthen democratic institutions, it may be the only way of preserving the independence of those countries where democracy exists. Certainly, the primary condition of preserving democracy, if it can be preserved at all, is the political independence of those people who wish to preserve it.

But the chief danger to democracy in the United States, President Day thinks, comes not from without but from within. Democracy is in some sense a social luxury. It does not flourish in communities on the verge of destitution. There must be, for the great majority of citizens, a sufficient equality of opportunity and of possessions so that the average man can feel that his future and the future of his children is reasonably secure. The disappearance

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of this feeling of economic security is the chief danger to democracy in the United States. "The enforced idleness of millions of young people cannot be longer tolerated. . . . If we fail to put our economic house in order America is headed for revolutionary changes whether or not there be attack from without."

This is the chief danger because the loss of economic security engenders fear and resentment, and fear and resentment are incompatible with those attitudes which are essential to the successful working of the democratic procedure. Democratic government rests upon the assumption that conflicts of interest can be reconciled by discussion of the issues involved, and by concessions voluntarily made in order to arrive at workable compromises. But discussion is futile unless the parties to it are agreed upon certain fundamentals, and compromise is impossible unless the concessions made are not regarded, on either side, as a fatal or permanent surrender of those vital interests which men will always fight for rather than surrender. At the present time an undue concentration of wealth and economic power in the hands of a few, and the loss



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of economic security and of equality of opportunity for the many, are creating a divergence of class interests so sharp that an attitude of confidence and good will is difficult to maintain on either side, and the democratic procedure becomes less effective as rational discussion is replaced by denunciation, and the disposition to make concessions gives way to the determination to dominate the situation at all hazards and by any means.

The problems of American Democracy, therefore, may not be attributed to weaknesses in the theory of democratic government. Rather, they are problems which relate directly to the individuals who share in the social luxury of democracy. They become essentially problems of the human spirit. Unless the human spirit is molded in a certain pattern, in a favorable social setting, democracy cannot be made to work. In the final address in the series, "The Discipline of Free Men," President Day offers a definition of this pattern; a strengthening of the human spirit through the enrichment of its opportunities.

In brief, clear, and refreshingly unacademic form President Day sets forth the dangers that

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threaten democracy: the double danger of social discord within the nations and of war between them. For the United States, fortunately, the danger that comes from war is not so immediate or so pressing as it is for European states. For us, the danger which President Day chiefly stresses is the danger that comes from our social discords. If these can be resolved with reasonable success, as President Day thinks they can be, the future of democracy in the United States is secure enough.

## WHAT REALLY THREATENS AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?

**T**HE IDEALS of democracy have long been the ideals of the American people. We accept democracy as a matter of tradition. So firmly are we committed to it that in much of our thinking we simply take it for granted. Nevertheless there are growing signs that we are holding our faith in democracy somewhat less assuredly than formerly. More and more frequently questions are being raised. Can democracy be made to work successfully in the rapidly changing social order of the

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20th century? Can democracy meet the challenge of the dictatorial governments? Is democracy after all but a passing phase in the never-ending evolution of human society—a phase that properly belongs to the period of unprecedented economic expansion witnessed especially during the 19th century?

Beyond doubt there are real threats to democracy in current world developments. Thomas Mann, in his stirring lecture on the Coming Victory of Democracy, has stated categorically: "Throughout the world it has become precarious to take democracy for granted—even in America." In what ways, or by reason of what forces is the present position of American democracy precarious? This is the question to which I propose to address your attention this morning. No question confronting the American people seems to me quite so important.

In the minds of some, the most serious threat to American democracy lies in the armed forces of the great dictatorships of Europe and the Far East. How can the United States, which has never taken its defenses any too seriously, hope to cope with the

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huge armies, the powerful navies, the overpowering air forces of a combination of such nations as Germany, Italy, and Japan? And how can the American people expect not to be attacked by a combination of such powers when America is in possession of so much of the world's wealth and they of relatively so little? According to this view it is only a question of time—only a question of our turn in the corporative schedule of conquests—when we, like the others, shall be overwhelmed by vastly superior armed forces, and American democracy will be no more.

While this line of reasoning may serve certain political purposes, it remains totally unconvincing. For at least three reasons, we are not likely to be the object of direct attack by the dictatorships under present conditions. First, our geographic position across the great oceans gives us enormous advantages in defense which even modern technology in warfare can hardly overcome. Second, in potentials of man power and material supplies, whatever our state of relative unpreparedness, we are at bottom a most formidable antagonist. Third, we are known to be a nation of indomitable fighters

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when once we are thoroughly aroused, and no other country, however arrogant, is likely to take the direct initiative in drawing us into war.

No, the dictatorships do not seriously threaten us by direct attack; nevertheless they are a menace to American democracy in two important ways. In the first place, they may in their program of imperial expansion precipitate a general European war. Such a conflict is almost certain to become a world war, with our own country sooner or later a participant on the side of the democracies. In the prosecution of such a war we should almost certainly have to abandon for the time being all pretense of maintaining democratic ways of living and transacting business. For the duration of the war, the United States would go authoritarian, like the opposing dictatorships. What would happen afterwards to the form of American government remains to be seen. Would democratic ways of life be restored? Nobody knows. Therein lies one of the dilemmas of democracy. Not to fight may mean the loss of democracy through humiliation and subjugation; to fight may mean the loss of democracy through unavoidable political transformations "to

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win the war." The dictatorships do threaten American democracy by putting to democracy everywhere this terrible riddle: To fight or not to fight, with the probable loss of democracy either way.

The dictatorships menace American democracy in a second way; namely, in the propaganda they spread. With the Fascists and Nazis, democratic ideals are objects of scorn and contempt. Democracy is an outmoded form of society; the tides of human progress have left it stranded on the dry sands of the dead past. All the charms of innovation and novelty are found in the new authoritarian regimes. Instead of being recognized as relapses into a discarded form of tyranny, they are held up as an example of a 20th century improvement of social organization. All the arts of modern propaganda are used to decry the shortcomings of democracy, and to glorify the accomplishments of authoritarianism. There is danger to American democracy in this if the forces of counter propaganda are not brought effectively into play. The time has passed when it is safe to take democracy for granted.

One of the threats to democracy which is most

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widely cited lies in the apparent consequences of modern science and technology. It is claimed that democracy could be expected to work, and did in fact work, quite satisfactorily so long as the economic system was predominately rural and agricultural, and in its industrial phase was largely in the hands of individual enterprisers. The expansion of industry and commerce, the development of the modern corporation, the emergence of the great consolidations or trusts, the revolutionary changes in technology, all these are supposed to have set the stage for a different political and social order. Democracy must, in short, now make way for a better form of social organization, just as democracy itself displaced earlier and outmoded forms.

There is much about this argument that carries weight. Changes in the economic situation, notably since the Great War, are flinging a challenge at democracy which is not easily met. Starvation in the midst of plenty, idleness in the face of need, unemployment despite a desire and a capacity for work, these are poisons no body politic can long withstand. If they cannot be substantially elimi-



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nated under democracy, an ultimate change in the social order is inescapable.

There is still reason to believe, however, that the major economic problems of the day can be solved under democratic procedures. That a larger measure of wise forward-planning and of subsequent effective control is requisite is self-evident. Excessive concentrations of power certainly have to be avoided; after all, democracy depends upon the participation of free men. The resources of government in intelligence, integrity, and technical competence have to be substantially enlarged. The people have to gain greater understanding of what can be done, and what cannot be done, economically. These tasks, however difficult, are not impossible and I, for one, believe democracy is capable of performing them. It is not in this quarter that the more serious threats to American democracy are to be found.

What of corruption and greed in our political life, do these seriously endanger American democratic institutions? Upon the whole, the answer is "no." Dishonest practices appear and reappear in American government with disheartening persist-

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ence, but over the years steady improvement is discernible; and an impressive record of conscientious and faithful discharge of heavy public responsibilities accumulates. Public administration in the United States is largely honest administration, and is progressively becoming more so. We may be discouraged at times that the standards of morality and personal integrity in public life have not risen more rapidly than they have. The fact remains that at this time no serious threat to American democracy comes from this quarter.

Some concern may reasonably be felt, however, over a closely related phase of American life, namely, the character and capacity of popular leadership in the United States of recent years. There appears to be a growing disposition among our so-called leaders to follow rather than to lead. The main idea seems to be to find out first what the voters want and then to serve as their pliant spokesmen. The result is that our political life becomes more and more a competition of interests, less and less a contest of principles. Increasingly we succumb to the attacks of self-seeking or fanatical propaganda. Statesmen who will accept political

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defeat, if necessary political elimination, for the sake of principle are likely to be thought mid-Victorian. It requires great fortitude to stand against the powerful pressure groups that have come to crowd our political arena, and the qualities of political leadership under the influences of such innovations as the direct primary, the initiative and referendum, the telegram barrage, the radio broadcast, the public opinion survey—to mention only a few of the most potent factors—give certain signs of deterioration. Herein lies a real threat to American democracy. No government dominated by pressure groups and propaganda is likely to serve the purposes of common justice and public well-being, and no democracy is likely to live durably that is not blessed with a wise, fearless, and unselfishly devoted public leadership.

All this points to another deep-seated factor that profoundly affects the prospects of our American society. Can we avoid excessive leveling down in our effort to establish a system of more complete social justice? In endeavoring to eliminate inequitable disparities of human circumstance, it is very easy indeed to provoke sentiments of envy and mal-

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ice which give rise to measures that over-shoot the mark. Humankind, after all, is not all of one pattern or grade. Individual differences of strength and ability, of industry and courage, are great. It will be a sorry day for democracy when these relatively large individual differences are ignored or seriously neglected in the rewards which society affords for sustained and constructive service. Democracy needs to preserve certain of the differentials of human experience. Extreme equalitarianism is a growing threat to American democratic ideals.

Another factor in American life constitutes a persistent menace; that is, our ready resort to force. In view of the conditions of frontier life, we doubtless come by this national trait naturally enough; the fact remains that it is time we outgrew it. There is a democratic way of dealing with social issues; it involves discussion, persuasion, balloting, acceptance of the ballot results, continuing review, and if necessary, revision of the earlier action by the same process. This is the peaceful way of getting along together. A resort to violent or coercive ways of dealing with social conflict is a negation of democ-

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racy, and an admission that, for some reason, democracy is unable to deal effectively with its current problems. Premier Daladier, in the recent French crisis, had this to say: "For myself, I consider that the best way to defend the republic, and I am a republican like every other man of feeling, is not to tolerate illegality, violence, and disorder." The New York Times, commenting editorially upon the French crisis, took the following stand: "Today the eyes of the world are on France. Much more is at stake than the fate of a one-day general strike, or the fate of the forty-hour week, or even the future of the Daladier Government. For what is being tested once more is the ability of one of the great democratic nations of the world to solve its internal problems peaceably. This is to say that what is being tested today in France is the democratic method itself.

"Democracy depends for its successful working on restraint, tolerance, and compromise. Democratic government, precisely because it relies rather upon voluntary cooperation than upon force, must in the main exact laws that inspire cooperation rather than provoke resistance. The minority, pre-

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cisely because democratic laws are passed in this spirit, owes at least its peaceful acquiescence in the final governmental decision, and should seek to change that decision by persuasion and not by defiance.

“But in France in the last few years the spirit of compromise and conciliation has steadily diminished. The Right and Left wings of opinion have been spreading farther apart. A proposal has only to be made by one side to be automatically denounced by the other. Fighting slogans and ultimatums supplant quiet discussion and adjustment.”

We Americans take the resort to force too complacently. We neglect to cultivate assiduously the art of dispassionate, critical, fair-minded thinking about social issues. We fail to practice sufficiently the art of calm, open-minded, and persuasive discussion of controverted social problems. We must come to see more clearly how indispensable these arts are to the preservation of democracy, and how serious are the possible consequences of their abandonment, in any connection whatever, for the ways of violence and force.

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Further threats to American democracy are to be found in the lack of social unity and discipline in our national life. In this respect the authoritarian governments have the democracies at a great disadvantage. They know what they are after—or at least think they do!—and their peoples are thoroughly disciplined to these ends. The driving power which is thus placed at the disposal of the dictators is impressive indeed. Moreover the tonic effects for the individual that are to be had from a general sense of social solidarity must be frankly admitted. Aimlessness is a devastating affliction for individual and nation alike. What the democracies need more than anything else at the moment is a clear consciousness of high purpose that will impart social unity and individual discipline. William James long since referred to this need as the moral equivalent of war. The dictators have given the phrase an exceedingly concrete current meaning. Will the democracies, seeing more clearly their great role in the upward struggle of humanity, answer the challenge in time?

They will if they can deal effectively with the most serious of all threats to democracy—the in-

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difference, complacency, and ignorance of those who have shared democracy's benefits. As I said at the outset, we Americans simply take democracy for granted. We have no awareness of what we would suffer if our democratic privileges were removed. We fail to sense what espionage, terrorism, completely arbitrary and despotic rule would mean to us individually. We make no sustained effort to understand what democracy is. We are prone to think of it as a system of government rather than as a form of human relationship in which men and women of every class and creed live together in peace. We fail to practice democracy in our daily living. We show no determination to make our individual contributions that democracy may be preserved and strengthened. We exhibit no lasting devotion to the common weal. From these deficiencies come the really serious threats to democracy in America.

Happily the nation is astir, and the forces which make for the defense of our free American institutions are at last gathering in formidable array. The cause for which America stands is the cause of humanity. It is a cause that ultimately, whatever



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the reverses, is bound to prevail. May you young people, in the lives you individually lead in the times that lie ahead, steadfastly keep the faith of those who as founding fathers caught the vision of democracy in America.

## A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

**I**T IS without apology that I address myself this morning to the state of the nation. Some of you may feel that on this occasion, held on this high campus in its setting of unsurpassed natural beauty, wonderfully removed from the world's turmoil, we might well find at least temporary escape from the horrors abroad and the anxieties at home. But in these days there can be neither forgetfulness nor withdrawal. Whether we will it or not, we are all players in the present world drama. The best we

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can do is to choose carefully the parts we as individuals and as a people are to play. No time is to be lost, no occasion neglected, in the initiation and pursuit of a wise, adequate, far-reaching program of individual and national thought and action.

Such a program under present critical conditions may appropriately be thought of as one of national defense. In saying this I do not presuppose any particular outcome of the present war. Nor do I have in mind exclusively those forms of defense with which the War and Navy Departments are directly concerned. Our country is under attack in ways that far transcend the powers of even the tremendous armed forces of the totalitarian states. We are at present in one of the most critical periods of all history. The issues which confront us profoundly affect the prospects of human progress for generations—yes, centuries—to come. Civilization, or at any rate what we have been accustomed to call civilization, appears to hang in the balance. Under these conditions it is imperative that a comprehensive program of national defense be shaped with all the wisdom and strength we can possibly marshal.

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It is quite impossible to plan any such program without first seeing clearly the nature of the forces by which we are threatened. These forces are diverse and complex. Some appear on the surface and are readily observed by all. Others lie far below, and commonly escape detection. They all need to be identified if the program of national defense is to be adequate.

The most obvious of the forces which threaten us is the armed force of the authoritarian states. For the first time we are seeing what devastating powers of destruction can be developed when a great people, completely regimented under a despotic and ruthless government, employs the full arsenal of modern science and technology. The picture is an appalling one. Suddenly our own armed forces seem pathetically weak. We may thank God for the oceans which separate us from warring Europe and Asia; but even oceans do not appear now to give the protection they once so surely afforded. Clearly great armies, navies, and air forces constitute one of the threats with which we are most seriously confronted.

The dictators have unleashed another devastat-

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ing force in their systematic attack on traditional canons of national honor and honesty. No pledge, however solemnly made, is subsequently respected; no guarantee, however seriously undertaken, is afterward fulfilled. Among the dictators it would look as if expediency were the only guiding principle, as if duplicity were a sterling virtue, as if honor had lost its very meaning. No longer is there any evidence of a moral imperative save within the party ranks. Power politics alone would seem to be the arbiter of the destiny of nations. Under the influences loosed by these concepts and practices, there has been a deterioration of international morals during the past few years that is of the greatest moment. It carries a threat to world order the seriousness of which can hardly be exaggerated.

The authoritarian debasement of truth and beauty is another threatening force with which we must all reckon. The untrammelled pursuit of truth and beauty accounts for much of the difference between civilization and savagery. To shackle the search for new knowledge and finer art is to block the way of further human progress. Yet the dictators do just that. Under the regimes which

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they have established, truth has to be licensed and beauty certified. The scholar, the scientist, the artist, all function under orders. Official regulations, suitably reinforced by propaganda, tell the people what is to be believed, what admired. The inquiring mind becomes a personal liability. This systematic enslavement of the human spirit is a sinister undertaking which free people the world over must combat by every possible means.

The authoritarian negation of humanity is another threat of tremendous implications. Assertions of racial superiority are but a phase of a fundamental philosophy. The masses are looked upon merely as material for the aggrandizement of the State. Democracy with its fundamental emphasis upon the dignity and worth of the individual is said to be a sickly sentimental, weak, and decadent form of society, on the way out. The great religions, and especially the Christian and Hebrew, are treated with contempt. The true sign of greatness in individuals and peoples alike is found in the ruthless exercise of power in the service of the State. Once more, as in the jungle, might makes right. Could there possibly be a sharper challenge

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to the values for which we have struggled through the generations in free America?

Some of these forces which are so dramatically evident these days in Europe already operate in one form or another in America. Happily they are not yet in the ascendancy. We must recognize, however, that they are amplified these days by the economic distress to which we have been subject now for more than a decade. Millions of our people find no employment. Huge supplies of credit accumulate in idleness in our banks. Business enterprise and capital investment show recurrent lethargy. Government strives to energize the system through huge public expenditures only to find the effects on the system as a whole inadequate and temporary. Discouragement and disillusionment are widespread. This seemingly chronic illness of our economic system involves dangers of a most formidable sort. The further disruptions of world trade which are almost certainly ahead of us will but add to the dangers which are already evident. An adequate program of national defense must restore the efficient functioning of our national economy.

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The threatening forces which I have enumerated would not be so formidable if contemporary society had not been in serious difficulties for some time past. People are perplexed and discouraged. Morale is low. For a host of people, life seems just too complicated and difficult. At the moment what many most desire is not individual freedom, but an ordered activity in a company to which they can feel they belong. The authoritarian states provide what great masses of people really want—an escape from the problems of individual responsibility. There is undoubted mass appeal in the ideology of the dictatorships. There is a kind of low persuasiveness about the unity and efficiency with which they manipulate their regimented followings. Small wonder that people find a lure in the systems they have developed: life is so much simpler when it ceases to be free. There is a sharp challenge to America in the doctrines and the regimes which the dictators seek to spread.

In planning a program of national defense we need to know not only the nature of the forces that threaten but also the probable methods of attack. These, like the forces themselves, are varied and



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complex. All need to be fully identified lest we leave ourselves at some point unguarded.

On the side of armed forces we face the possibility of the *blitzkrieg*. Its suddenness and devastating power are now known to all. It is warfare, fully modernized, completely mechanized, streamlined in every detail of organization and equipment. On land its power is such that it has yet to be stopped. Thanks to the European developments of the last nine months, the *blitzkrieg* will not take us by surprise: we can now tell of what this type of attack consists.

The "fifth column" form of attack is by nature more difficult to recognize. That it has been widely used seems to be established. In essence it is carefully devised treachery, organized and manned in the enemy's country, in advance of the outbreak of hostilities. On a prearranged signal, the "fifth column" attacks from within, subjecting the defense to the demoralization which quickly spreads when disloyalty and betrayal suddenly become evident "inside the ranks." It may be entirely quixotic to think these days of more respectable and less respectable ways of conducting warfare among na-

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tions, but it is difficult not to think of the "fifth column" as one of the more despicable forms of combat. Nevertheless apparently it has come and has come to stay. Certainly it has to be recognized as one of the types of attack for which we must be prepared.

Attack by propaganda is, of course, one of the most highly elaborated forms of offense of the authoritarian states. For years now it has been aimed at the neighboring European democracies. In the event of a German victory, the full force of authoritarian propaganda will doubtless be turned toward the Western Hemisphere and especially toward our free American institutions. Applied to disillusioned and discouraged people, it is a type of attack likely to be seriously effective.

Encouraged by this stream of foreign propaganda, various organizations, pretending to support our American institutions but in fact undermining the faith of our American people in their cultural heritage, will doubtless become active. Some of these organizations, like the Bund, will openly announce the source of their allegiance; others will masquerade under patriotic symbols

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and do what they can to disguise their un-American activities. Whatever their names and whatever their nominal purposes, these alien legions will constitute still another type of attack against which it will not be easy to erect effective defenses.

The most serious attacks of all will be of a more insidious sort. They will come from no one source; they will be directed toward no one weakness. Some will be thoroughly organized; others will be almost inadvertent. Their general effect will be to break our national unity. They will play upon our prejudices, our fears, our dislikes, our hates. They will trade upon our loyalties, and our unthinking patriotism. They will seek to exploit our discontent and failure; the disillusionment and frustration we have suffered. Suspicion and mistrust will be fomented. Self-appointed G-men will become active in our midst. Liberals will be called communists, and "queer people"—especially those with foreign names or foreign accents—will be charged with being members of the "fifth column." Colleges and universities will be said to be centers of "red" activity. If this sort of attack succeeds, it will leave us a "house divided against itself"—an

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easy prey to the alien legions, if not to the invading armies. It is this type of attack which the dictators have used so successfully against their neighboring states in Europe. It is this type of attack which more seriously threatens us than any other. It is this type of attack against which it is going to be most difficult to defend. Divisiveness is a fatal social disease; national unity a social necessity. Let us not forget that the most insidious dangers of these next years will be those which threaten our solidarity as Americans.

Against this formidable array of threatening forces, with their variant forms of attack, what defenses must we raise? This question we Americans must answer, and answer promptly, with all the wisdom and courage and far-sightedness we can command.

That an adequate program of national defense must add greatly to our armed forces is perfectly evident. The requisite program of training and supply should be initiated at once and prosecuted with the utmost energy. The air forces in particular should be greatly augmented. In this line we should be prepared to hold our own against all

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comers. Our industrial plants, our means of transport, our food and raw material supplies, all should be geared into our armed defenses so as to assure efficient operation of the entire system in time of need. No corners should be cut in making sure that we are adequately manned and equipped to meet whatever armed attacks may come. However regrettable it may be to devote our national resources to such a program, we have no option under present conditions.

The program of armament will probably aid in the effective initiation of another essential defense measure, namely the better operation of our economic system. We have taken about all the economic punishment we can stand without revolutionary changes in our government, if not in our society. The persistent unemployment of millions of workers must in some way be overcome. The enforced idleness of millions of young people cannot be longer tolerated. Some way must be found, and found soon, to restore the full momentum of our national economy. If this means somewhat larger opportunities for private profit-taking than have been available during the past few years, these op-

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portunities should be created. The alternative is a frank switch to state socialism—a system for which as a people we are not likely now to display either taste or capacity. No, for the present at least we had better stick to our traditional system of regulated private enterprise. But if that is the answer, the system must be made to work. For the present this is our foremost problem of national defense, and no absorption in the course of events abroad should be allowed to obscure that fact. If we fail to put our economic house in order, America is headed for revolutionary changes whether or not there is attack from without.

This is certainly so if we lose ground seriously to the divisive influences which are bound to play upon our national life during the next few years. The first defense against these influences should be a reaffirmation of our faith in democracy. We still believe that "government should exist for the benefit of free and equal citizens, politically united in a common purpose, the happiness of each and all." We still believe with Lord Russell that the true signs of civilization "are thought for the poor and suffering, chivalrous regard and respect for

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women, the frank recognition of human brotherhood irrespective of race or color or nation or religion, the narrowing of the domain of mere force as a governing factor in the world, the love of ordered freedom, abhorrence of what is mean and cruel and vile, ceaseless devotion to the claims of justice." Contrast these words of Lord Russell with words of Mussolini: "Words are beautiful things. Machine guns, ships, aeroplanes are still more beautiful." "War alone brings to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility on the people who have courage to lead it." "Believe, obey, fight." Such is the doctrine of those who glorify war. If in contrast you believe that the great religious leaders have been nearer the truth than the great dictators, if you believe in the progressive liberation of the human spirit, if you believe in freedom rather than enslavement, let your lives evidence your conviction.

When faith weakens, the defenses fail; but it is not enough to have faith. It is in the humble actions of our daily living that some of our most important defenses must be built. We must have courage. We must keep our heads. We must seek out the

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facts—if possible find the truth. We must combat fraud and greed and sheer selfishness. We must strive to act fairly and justly. We must not entertain suspicions without supporting evidence. We must be quick to respond to the needs of our fellows. We must live with good will. We must be tolerant of honest differences of opinion if they be not seditious. We must seek the common good. We must avoid the passionate and violent. We must resist with all our might those forces which would divide us among ourselves, and so weaken us as to make us an easy prey for our enemies. In short, a comprehensive program of national defense for these days of crisis and for the years that lie ahead calls for a full commitment of every one of us to humane and rational living.

These are days when there are ample grounds for pessimism; the days ahead look difficult, to say the least. But I, for one, do not share the view that the only rational attitude at this time is one of despondency. We may be challenged, but we have the means to meet the challenge in full. Life may look insecure, but could it possibly look more vital and significant? Given health and one's senses, can-



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not life still be full of enjoyment? These times may try men's souls—but, thank God, men have souls to be tried. Given the will, you men and women of the Class of 1940 can make your lives count as has been rarely possible. See if you cannot bring to them the spirit of adventure. Courageous devotion of our individual selves to the progressive liberation of mankind—that is what makes life a truly great adventure; that is what, most of all, makes life worth the living.

# CHARACTER IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT SOCIAL SITUATION

ONE of the most difficult tasks of a democratic society is to keep the electorate imbued with a live and persistent sense of responsibility for what happens. For most of us the "state of the nation" appears to be just a part of the environment which we are compelled to take largely as is, certainly not a condition of life which we with others may reasonably undertake to alter. An attitude of resigned acceptance in national affairs may follow from this sense of remoteness and

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of relative helplessness. The fact remains that indifference or disgust or despair with regard to the course of economic or political developments is in a democratic society an insidious and dangerous weakness.

The present state of our nation is an intriguing subject of discourse, and commencement addresses this season are dealing at length with many phases of the subject. This morning, however, my own thoughts are running in a somewhat different direction. This is not because I wish to avoid the introduction of anything unpleasant. As a matter of fact, despite the current confusion and perplexities of society, the outlook for you young people does not seem to me forbidding. I am not disposed to commiserate with the oncoming generation. After all you have life before you, and life, taken wisely, remains a great privilege. No, my reason for not speaking on this occasion about the social situation is not that I find the subject unpleasant or uninteresting or hackneyed, but that I wish to refer to certain other matters which even more directly concern your own individual lives.

Our common concern these days with the diffi-

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culties and uncertainties of the social situation leads us at times to forget the importance of the personal standards of the multitude of *individuals* of whom each society, simple or complex, is constituted. In social organization, the whole may be greater than the sum of the parts, but the parts remain tremendously important. Right now, social conditions being what they are, the norms of individual living have acquired new significance. There are profoundly important character implications in the sickness of contemporary society. I wish to bring some of these implications pointedly to your attention.

May I first note that there is a crying need these days for good old-fashioned fortitude. The present is no time for the timorous. Courage has gone to a premium. Not so much courage to take bodily risks or to withstand physical suffering as courage to push on when difficulties seem insurmountable and goals unattainable. Worth-while living always has required courage of this sort. The more intelligent and responsible we become, the more does daily courage become indispensable. Life is a never-ending struggle between doubt and deci-

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sion, between fear and faith. The maintenance of morale is our basic individual problem. Nations have come to see clearly enough that in any crucial undertaking, such as the conduct of war, if morale goes, all is lost. The same holds for the individual—for each one of us. Without spirit and hope, without confidence and zest, life sinks to a level that yields no lasting satisfaction. Faith in the significance of human aspiration and experience, and courage to see this faith into sustained action, these are at the same time an essential of social progress and of individual achievement. This is tantamount to saying that life without religion is impossible; just as aspiration without faith is impossible. Do not let the years bring you disillusionment. Your hopes and ambitions of this very moment may lie nearer truth and reality than will in your lifetime ever become evident. Keep on facing experience valiantly. In the words of Dr. Sizoo's eloquent message of yesterday, "Do not be content to wade the shallow waters, swim the deep river." The times require men and women of enduring courage. May you members of the Class of 1939 day by day and in whatever paths you may follow display that

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fortitude and strength of spirit which will make your lives worth living.

Next may I urge you to live your lives without malice. We move in a period of appalling ill-will. Nation against nation, class against class, race against race, group against group view each other with suspicion and distrust, when not with open hostility. The arts of modern propaganda fan the flames of bitterness, and efforts to promote understanding and considerateness fall on deafened ears. The social situation in these respects is deteriorating at a rate that is truly alarming. After all, hatred is a poison which no body politic can long withstand. In human relations there is no substitute for *good-will*. Social progress is to be achieved through negotiation and peace, not through exploitation and war. The perplexities of these troubled times are only to be resolved by men and women of unflinching humanitarianism who work with sympathy and understanding to establish justice, to insure tranquillity, to promote the general welfare, and to secure to themselves and posterity the blessings of their hard-won liberty. May you members of the Class of 1939 never fail to exhibit that under-

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standing and good-will of which our times are so desperately in need.

In one other direction, the present social situation carries implications for individual character that should be recognized. The growing complexity of our economic, political, and social relationships tends to impersonalize more and more our day-to-day dealings. Increasingly we transact business through corporate bodies, governmental agencies, and other large organizations which take our dealings out of any personal context. In matters of ethics and morals we are more nearly on our individual own than ever before. In consequence individual integrity grows in importance. We sorely need more men and women whose word is as good as their bond; whose honor is high above suspicion. Edmund Burke once observed that he knew no way of indicting a whole people. Neither is there known any way of policing a whole people. All any government can undertake to do is to police the few who respect no authority not backed by force. The system works because the great majority obey the dictates of their individual consciences. *Self-imposed* responsibility is what holds any

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effectively-free society together. We need more of that type of responsibility in our present social situation. The kind of personal integrity that sets its own high standards of right and worthy conduct, that enforces its own exacting rules and regulations, that places its own conscience in continuing judgment over the inevitable mistakes and failures of life, this kind of personal integrity is needed today as never before. Let not the vicissitudes of life lead you into that irreparable betrayal which consists of a betrayal of your own better selves. Whatever the measure of success that you may individually achieve, may you members of the Class of 1939, each and every one of you, develop that personal integrity and self-imposed responsibility which lie at the very foundation of every orderly and progressive society.

There is no mistaking the fact that we face today many grave social problems. Of these I have not attempted to speak. Instead I have tried to bring to your attention some of the implications of our social distress for your own innermost living. Abiding happiness in life lies in qualities of mind and



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character. Social reform, whatever its range and promise, will never achieve the hoped-for results if it fails to establish the moral and spiritual bases for life together, in justice and in peace.

## THE DISCIPLINE OF FREE MEN

**I**T is as fellow citizens of the world's greatest democracy that I address you today. I take it that you and I are agreed that this country of ours should remain free. The present world situation being what it is, this insistence upon freedom raises far-reaching questions of national defense. Part of these questions have to do with our own armed forces, at home and abroad, and with our possible aid to Britain; part relate to matters of a very different sort: they concern the temper of the Amer-

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ican people. It is because I am convinced of the surpassing importance of this phase of the defense program that I speak to you today of the discipline of free men.

It is high time for America to face squarely the problems of individual and social discipline in a democracy. The fate of nations is in large measure a matter of the disciplines they develop. This is true in periods of peace; it becomes strikingly true in times of international conflict. Right now, America is confronted by hostile nations which have effected discipline both formidable and threatening. These enemy powers of Europe and Asia view the democratic way of life as soft and spineless. They sneer at our lack of national solidarity. They charge us with being disillusioned and disorganized, sickly if not crippled, weak, and vulnerable. They assert that our very ideals of freedom and loyalty are incompatible. They threaten us with the conquest which they have already visited upon other democratic peoples. What is the answer we are to make to these charges and threats from abroad? What is the nature of the social discipline with which we may expect to op-

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pose successfully the aggressive disciplines of the new dictatorships?

If we are to deal clearly and constructively with these problems of individual and social discipline, we must first get an adequate conception of what discipline is. Unfortunately the term has come to have a variety of meanings. Not infrequently it refers to some form of chastisement through which obedience is compelled. Basically, however, discipline means a course of instruction suited to a particular type of learner. It suggests a program of training and experience for discipleship. This in turn implies a set of restraints under which near and present interests are put aside in furtherance of some more remote and higher goal. What is called for is a curbing of the impulse of the moment, a postponement of immediate gratifications, a denial of instinctive urges, an avoidance of dissipation and self-indulgence; in short, a consistently constructive reaction to experience and training in the service of more commanding interests. Discipline is, as we shall use the term, this ordering of life to some larger and more impelling purpose. Specifically, in what we shall have to say,

it is the ordering of our individual lives for the preservation and promotion of a free society. Such a discipline in America at this time is a matter, not of idealistic ethics, but of inescapable politics. Adequate individual and social discipline is an indispensable condition of the national unity without which we cannot survive. Undisciplined, America has no chance at all of remaining free and democratic in the world of today.

Before we go further, let us dispose once and for all of the mistaken notion that freedom and discipline are in opposition to one another. Sound discipline is never solely or even primarily repressive; it is designed to strengthen the powers and thereby to enlarge the opportunities of the learner. To take a simple example: the lad who, through sustained effort and arduous practice, has mastered the art of swimming does not thereafter face a more restricted life. On the contrary, as a result of the discipline he has undergone, he has gained access to large new areas of enjoyment and possible usefulness. In general, discipline is the channel through which new activities are made available. Far from being opposites, freedom and discipline are alter-

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nating phases of human growth and development. Certainly discipline is the only sure way to the larger freedom of which mankind is in search.

Discipline involves individual restraint; of that there can be no question. How is this restraint to be induced? In general, two types of influence may be brought to bear: first, the fear of punishment; second, the hope of rewards. It is the former of these types which has come to usurp at times the very term discipline. The child is disciplined when shut up in a closet by its parents or kept after school by its teacher. It is the fear of these unpleasant experiences which is expected to produce the desired restraint in the child. Much of our traditional morality rests upon fear of later consequences, either in this life or in the life hereafter. A great deal of our present moral confusion derives from the weakening of these fears and the absence, for the time being, of any effective substitute influences of a more positive sort. In building an adequate and enduring discipline, reliance must be placed increasingly upon rewards rather than upon punishments, even if both types of inducement remain operative. In the long run, restraints must be

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seen positively in the light of the greater satisfactions to which they give access. Moreover, they must be strengthened through knowledge, insight, conscience, approbation, achievement, habituation.

The present world conflict is a struggle of fundamentally opposed social disciplines. On the one hand is the discipline of the dictatorships. It is a forced, regimented, authoritarian discipline. It is harsh, callous, ruthless, utterly demanding. The command put to the people is direct and unmistakable. In Mussolini's words, it is "Believe, obey, fight." In such a regime, the will of the state is supreme; it brooks no opposition, no questioning, no review—overt or hidden—of its performance. Its rule is unlimited; its discipline absolute.

The initiation of any such discipline, certainly among a people who have previously enjoyed a measure of freedom, can be accomplished only through physical violence. The factor of overpowering fear has to be brought into play. Revolution, assassination, torture, terrorism are the means by which the new discipline is introduced. These are supplemented later with systematic persecution,

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continuous espionage, party purges, the concentration camp. As the system becomes more firmly established, the positive factors which make for complete regimentation are utilized. All the modernized instruments of propaganda are employed to control and manipulate the entire thinking and feeling of the people. Dislikes, prejudices, wants, ambitions—all the conceivable interests, dispositions, and sentiments of all classes of society—are grist for the propaganda mill. The party is extolled, its leader deified. The schools, the press, the cinema, the radio, pageantry, work, and recreational activity, all are exploited to a single end—the establishment of an absolute national unity, unquestioning and subservient.

In striking contrast is the other form of social discipline: the discipline of the free or democratic society. Its foundations lie deep in human hope and aspiration. It builds not in fear of suffering and misfortune, but in the promise of greater happiness and freedom. The values toward which it endeavors to direct the larger powers which flow from social discipline are the values which reside in a broad and expanding humanitarianism. It finds no



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place for treachery and cynicism. It knows and respects the record of the age-long struggle through which men and women—a host of them Americans—have gained such freedom as we have. It believes in peace. It has a great and enduring faith in mankind. It is a discipline that is responsible and self-imposed. It is the discipline of free men. It is the discipline of the democratic peoples of the world now and in all time to come.

The discipline of free men is a discipline of body and mind and spirit. Discipline of the body among free men is designed to assure bodily health and a larger capacity for, and enjoyment in, activities requiring physical skill and exertion. We are all possessed of certain imperious appetites and desires. We are prone to indulge these appetites and desires to excess. We all have to learn the lesson of temperance—an essential part of the program of adequate discipline in a society in which private indulgences are supposedly private affairs. A large measure of muscular coordination and control, achieved in youth, adds greatly to the opportunities for healthful recreation in adult life. Too many of us now lack agility, are without grace of

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body movement, have little capacity for physical endurance. In general, it may be said that free societies have neglected the discipline of the body. The Greeks knew better. In this country we have commonly left physical culture and athletic skill to the professional and the expert while, as spectators in the stands, we have grown indolent and soft. In recent years the popularization of motorized transportation has accentuated the deterioration of our muscular mechanisms. As a people, we need to reverse these trends through a national program of effective physical education. Among free men the body should be trained to be a faithful and efficient servant of the mind and spirit. This requires knowledge of the principles of hygiene, sustained effort and practice, all the habituation along sound lines that can be achieved: in short, it requires a rigorous bodily discipline. Men who have achieved their full freedom will have successfully established this discipline of the body.

Discipline of the mind is one of the most important phases of the discipline of free men; for in matters of thought the free society differs fundamentally from the regimented. Democracies have

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faith in the human intellect. They believe that the pursuit of truth should be completely untrammelled. But they know full well how difficult truth-finding is, and hence how important it is to cultivate among all the people certain intellectual virtues.

The fundamental element in the discipline of the mind of the free man is a love of truth. The free man is aware of the extent to which dogma, prejudice, and self-interest block the path of reason in ordinary thinking. Consequently he is constantly on guard against error and half-truths. He abhors name-calling as a form of argument. He knows that reason does not appeal to passion, least of all to hatred. The free man cultivates a measure of incredulity, and avoids a blind acceptance of tradition and authority. He is prepared to suspend judgment until the available evidence is in and fully weighed. He seeks constantly to be unbiased, objective, fair-minded, intellectually honest; to think freely, critically, clearly. He is humble enough to admit the possibility of his own error and hence is tolerant of the honest thinking of others who disagree with him. He has an inquiring mind, an ap-

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petite for new truth. He respects knowledge and, as opportunity offers, acquires it; but he realizes that the possession of knowledge gives no guarantees that commendable habits of thought have been acquired. He knows that these habits of thought presuppose sustained effort and repeated use of certain intellectual tools—a difficult discipline of the mind. But free men realize that the wide attainment of this discipline is an indispensable condition for the maintenance and preservation of a free society. The discipline of mind required of free men may be an ideal clearly beyond our present reach; it remains a goal toward which, by every conceivable means, we must endeavor to progress.

The discipline of spirit which characterizes free men is a compound of many elements. They are needed in varying proportions in different times and different places. Certain of the principal elements are very much needed in America in these difficult days.

Courage is one such element. Our times are troubled and confused. A sense of insecurity and of impending misfortune, if not disaster, is widespread. Men's spirits are low. Times such as these call for

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stamina, tenacity of purpose, sheer fortitude. It is not so much courage to take bodily risks or to withstand physical suffering that is needed as it is courage to push on when misfortune comes or when difficulties seem insurmountable and goals unattainable. Worth-while living always has required this sort of pluck. Life after all is a never-ending struggle between doubt and decision, between fear and faith. To it has to be brought a readiness for adventure. Without spirit and hope, without confidence and zest, life sinks to a level that yields no lasting satisfaction. Men to be free must be valiant.

Honesty is equally an indispensable element in the discipline of free men. No free society can even hold together without it. Resort to treachery may bring certain quick returns; in the long run, it spells disaster. Free men are forthright, dependable, trustworthy. They honor their pledges; their word is as good as their bond. Free men are upright.

Free men are industrious. They have learned at first hand the satisfactions of honest purposeful endeavor. They accept the obligation to work and to work faithfully. They deplore the current inadequacy of opportunities for remunerative work, and

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view involuntary unemployment with deepest concern. Believing in production, they do not willingly resort to destruction or waste. They respect excellence of performance on whatever job it may appear. They have learned through discipline that there are profoundly important satisfactions in work well done. They look upon indolence and sloth as inexcusable weaknesses. They are men given to action.

Free men are men of good will. They know that hatred of *men* rather than of *evil* is a devastating passion in human affairs. Free men avoid malice and envy as they would poison. They are devoted to justice, sensitive to human needs and aspirations, considerate of their fellow men. They are never arrogant. They know how to cooperate unselfishly. They make their direct contributions to the common good: they are essentially of generous disposition. They eschew any resort to force, whatever its form. They are for a peaceful world-order. They believe genuinely in humanity, in the brotherhood of man.

Finally, free men possess a continuing sense of inner power. At the very core of life there is some-

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thing profoundly personal for each one of us. Deep within there is a phase of experience which we do not share with any other human being—we do not because we can not. It is like a hidden edifice which we have perforce fashioned just for ourselves. It may be a castle, or a simple cottage; sometimes, unhappily, just a shack. Therein is the domicile of our personal integrity. Therein we sit down with the Great Spirit when he comes. Therein is neither pride nor vainglory, only humility and prayer. Free men have learned to walk humbly with their God. They are fundamentally reverent. In a discipline of body and mind and spirit they have found the real meaning of salvation.

This many-sided discipline of free men is not to be thought of as an idealistic code lying completely beyond the reach of ordinary men. It is the way of life which must be widely achieved if democratic peoples are to stay free and independent. The important thing is to see clearly the nature of the daily ordering of individual living which is essential to the free society, and then to devise the necessary programs of action which will produce the requisite individual and social disciplines. In part

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this is a matter of mass education and of moral leadership for those who will accept the discipline of free men once it is wisely and adequately offered. In part it is a matter of dealing effectively with the persistently undisciplined.

Every society, whatever the form of its discipline, must find ways of dealing with its undisciplined members. Societies operating under authoritarian regimes have relatively simple ways of handling the recalcitrant, these ways consisting largely of apprehension and removal. No system of civil rights and guaranteed justice complicates the process. In democratic societies, effective handling of the undisciplined is a much more difficult matter. In the first place it is more difficult to decide who are the undisciplined; in the second place, it is more difficult to handle them properly after their identities have been established.

The most obvious undisciplined members of any society are the criminals. Everyone recognizes them because as a class they are openly defiant. Always, too, there are the revolutionists, sometimes avowed and sometimes masquerading. These vio-



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late, and would, if they could, destroy, the discipline under which the free society is endeavoring to operate. Other less obvious undisciplined groups are similarly failing to meet the requirements of a truly free society. There are, for example, the fanatics who are doing open violence to the discipline of the mind which is demanded of free men. There are, also, the unrelenting egotists who fail miserably to exhibit the social conscience and humane sensitivity which among free men characterize the discipline of the spirit. Then, too, there are the lazy and the dishonest, in both high and low places. All these corrupt the ideals and purposes of democracy.

Organizing for the attainment of a more effective social discipline is one of the most pressing problems now confronting the American people. In part it is a matter of formal education. Our schools and colleges must be made to contribute more than they do to the necessary disciplines of our democratic way of life. In part it is a matter of adult education through all the available media of communication. Every citizen should come to know and

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be led to practice the disciplines which must prevail if America is to remain free. In part it is a matter of moral leadership. America craves the leadership of those who understand and in high office exemplify the democratic way of life. As a people we must be led to see first things first. We must moderate our materialism and love of money. We must abandon our worship of personal power. We must re-define success in terms of service to one's fellow men. We must put the full force of public approbation and social prestige behind the contributions which fortify a just and progressive free society. We must improve our organization for dealing promptly and justly and at the same time effectively with the undisciplined. We must increase opportunities for purposeful activity. We must give meaning to life even for the most humble and inexperienced. We must strive with all the devotion we can muster to achieve the discipline of free men. This is no mere pious moralizing or wishful thinking: it is necessary action and hence practical politics, if America along with the rest of the world is not to fall back into another Dark Age. In the discipline of free men lies the only hope

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of mankind, and on that same discipline depends now and for generations to come the very existence of the free America for which our fathers fought and died.

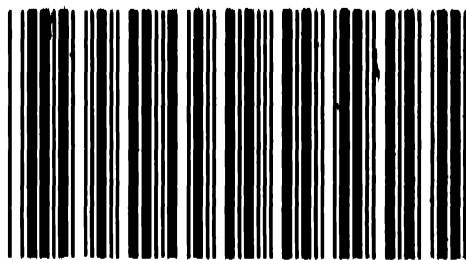








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